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**Testimony Before the
Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Homeland Security
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Assembly Bill 240**

I want to thank Chairperson Kessler for scheduling Assembly Bill 240 for a public hearing today.

This bill before you would make June 19th a legal holiday in Wisconsin. As the bill indicates, establishing Juneteenth as a legal holiday would not affect the number of paid holidays for public employees.

Juneteenth commemorates the day freedom that became real to 250,000 slaves in the South when Union General Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865 to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation - more than two-and-a-half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln.

A legal holiday has greater stature and permanence than a day of observance. It is cited in statutes as a day that cannot be counted for legal purposes or for the purposes of holding a recall election. At the same time, this bill has no fiscal effect because a legal holiday by itself does not give state workers a day off with pay. That is an issue for contract negotiations, or collective bargaining.

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated day of commemoration of the end of slavery. In fact, it's a world wide celebration, marked by some in daylong, week-long and month-long observances. African-Americans look to this day as one of reflection, a day of renewal.

For many African Americans, the 19th of June, or Juneteenth Independence Day, and the 4th of July complete the "cycle of freedom" for Americans celebrating freedom.

I would ask you to help complete this cycle of freedom by supporting this bill.

I thank the Committee for your time and consideration of this matter.